

An Interview with Marianne Williamson:  
**A Course in Miracle Weight Loss**

by Tree Bernstein

*“...Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”*

— Marianne Williamson

This passage, often attributed to Nelson Mandela's inaugural address, actually comes from *A Return to Love*, by Marianne Williamson, published in 1992. Williams is quite gracious about the misattributed quote. “As honored as I would be had President Mandela quoted my words, indeed he did not. I have no idea where that story came from, but I am gratified that the paragraph has come to mean so much to so many people.” Perhaps for Williamson, offering it up is just part of the ongoing *A Course in Miracles*.

Since the mid-seventies, Marianne Williamson has taught and talked and written about *A Course in Miracles*. Referred to as The Course, or ACIM, the curriculum offers self-study in spiritual transformation in 365 lessons. Despite some theological detractors, ACIM continues to thrive in spiritual communities around the world. Since 1976, over two million copies of the book have been sold. In the introduction, the author Dr. Helen Schucman asserts, “Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.”

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Marianne Williamson is an internationally acclaimed spiritual teacher and author. Six of her ten books, including *A Return to Love*, have been on the *New York Times* Best Seller list. Four of these have reached the top of the list. Williamson's latest Best Seller is *A Course in Weight Loss: 21 Spiritual Lessons for Surrendering Your Weight Forever*. Oprah selected *A Course in*

*Weight Loss* as one of her Favorite Things in 2010. Other books include *The Age of Miracles*, *Everyday Grace*, *A Woman's Worth*, *Illuminata*, *Healing the Soul of America* and *The Gift of Change*.

Whole Person: A major component of your workshops hinge on shared-support groups that, as you say, “. . .enrich your journey through the course, building community through discussion and mutual support.” Could you please elaborate on the power of such support?

Marianne Williamson: Just like 12-step meetings, when someone is dealing with a compulsive or addictive or destructive behavior, it is very helpful to have the support of others experiencing the same journey. It can make a tremendous difference. When you meet with a group once a week you get support and reinforcement. In a *Course in Miracles*, it says, “A idea is stronger when it is shared.”

WP: I noticed at your website ([acourseinweightloss.com](http://acourseinweightloss.com)) you have a tab to Start A Book Club In Your Area or Join A Book Club In Your Area. Is this a way to create your own satellite community?

MW: It's nothing formal; it's simply that with a group of ten or more, when they get to lesson ten in the book, they can set-up a free teleconference with me. Some of the material is quite deep.

People may have questions. It makes me happy to think I can support the process.

WP: In your new book, *A Course in Weight Loss*, you say you want to show how to understand the intersection between spirituality and weight loss. What is the connection?

MW: My book is not written for the person who wants to lose 5 or 10 pounds. This book addresses the issue of seriously compulsive behavior. What happens when a person has a serious compulsion is that the compulsion overrides the self-discipline and rationality of that person, it overrides the brain circuitry of self-discipline, even self-will. However, while the compulsion overrides the brain circuitry of self-discipline, God overrides the compulsion. It takes a spiritual connection to get to recovery.

When I was first writing the book, there was discussion that perhaps the book should just be about compulsive and addictive behavior. But I felt that while culturally there tends to be mainstream understanding while dealing with alcoholism or drug addiction that a spiritual experience is somehow called for. As a society we tend to view food compulsion — obesity — as simply a lack of will. I am disappointed by the lack of compassion. I felt that it would be helpful to move the conversation to spiritual, emotional, and psychological blocks to unwise eating patterns.

WP: Why is forgiveness so important and why is it the path to inner peace?

MW: From a spiritual perspective, there is only one of us here. There really is no place where your mind stops and mine starts. When I have attack thoughts, unforgiving thoughts towards another person, I'm really attacking myself. For the compulsive eater unwise eating is an act of violence towards oneself, it is an act of betrayal. Something happens in the brain circuitry that interprets overeating as comforting when it is actually self-destructive. At the deepest level this represents a place of lack of love towards the self, for whatever reason it has become an entrenched emotional pattern. Forgiving oneself and others becomes a profound component in dismantling these thoughts and behaviors of violence towards oneself.

WP: Then how does the seeker of peace, or of love, or even of weight loss reconcile the high ideals and philosophy of spiritual practice versus everyday life?

MW: Real spirituality is eminently practical. In *A Course in Miracles*, we say that at their peak religion and psychotherapy are the same. Nothing could be more practical than being released from compulsive cravings. What could be more practical than dismantling these blocks?

**Tree Bernstein**, a.k.a. Ms. Metaphor ([AskMsMetaphor.com](http://AskMsMetaphor.com)), is a graduate of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University, where she learned her peas and cues and a MFA in Writing & Poetics.



Williamson will be teaching *A Return to Love Workshop Practicing the Principles of A Course in Miracles*, at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott Hotel in L.A. July 1-3. The website [marianne.com](http://marianne.com) has the details.